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Daily Evening Bulletin.

THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 18, 1875.

SOUTH DOME.

**Its Ascent by George Anderson and John Muir—
Hard Climbing but a Glorious View—Botany
of the Dome—Yosemite in Late Autumn.**

[FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.]

YOSEMITE VALLEY, November 10, 1875.

The Yosemite South Dome is the noblest rock in the Sierra, and George Anderson, an indomitable Scotchman, has made a way to its summit. All the surface features of the flank of the range, "Domes," "conoids," "Mountains," "hills," and "rocks," are extremely simple in form and sculpture as compared with the jagged peaks marshaled along the summit, and the question of the accessibility of any one of them may be conclusively decided in a few hours, leaving no room whatever for the play of effort-making, or for those exciting hopes and fears so grateful to the strong mountaineer. With the exception of the conoidal summit of Mount Starr King, and a few minor spires and pinnacles, the South Dome is the only inaccessible rock of the valley, and its inaccessibility is pronounced in very severe and simple terms, leaving no trace of hope for the climber without artificial means. But longing eyes were none the less fixed on its noble brow, and the Anderson way will be eagerly ascended.

THE DOME DESCRIBED.

The Dome rises from the level floor of the valley to the height of very nearly a mile. The north side is absolutely vertical from the summit to a depth of about 1,900 feet. On the south it is nearly vertical to as great a depth. The west side presents a very steep and firmly drawn curve from the summit down a thousand feet or more; while on the east, where it is united with the dividing ridge between the great Tenaya and Nevada canyons, the Dome may be easily approached within six or seven hundred feet of the summit, where it rises in a smooth, graceful curve just a few degrees too steep to climb. Nearly all Sierra rocks are accessible on the eastern or upper side, because the glacial force which eroded them out of the solid acted from this direction; but special conditions in the position and structure of the South Dome prevented the formation of the ordinary low grade, and it is this steep upper portion that the plucky Anderson has overcome. John Conway, a resident of the valley, has a flock of small boys who climb smooth rocks like lizards, and some two years ago he sent them up the dome with a rope, hoping they might be able to fasten it with spikes driven into fissures, and thus reach the top. They took the rope in tow and succeeded in making it fast two or three hundred feet above the point ordinarily reached, but finding the upper portion of the curve impracticable without laboriously drilling into the rock, he called down his lizards, thinking himself fortunate in effecting a safe retreat.

ANDERSON'S FEAT

Mr. Anderson began with Conway's old rope, part of which still remains in place, and resolutely drilled his way to the top, inserting eyebolts five or six feet apart, and making his rope fast to each in succession, resting his foot on the last bolt while he drilled for the next above. Occasionally some irregularity in the curve or slight foothold would enable him to climb fifteen or twenty feet independently of the rope, which he would pass and begin drilling again, the whole being accomplished in a few days. From this slender beginning he will now proceed to construct a substantial stairway which he hopes to complete in time for next year's travel; and as he is a man of rare energy the thing will surely be done. Then, all may sing "Excelsior" in perfect safety.

MR. MUIR TAKES A WALK UP THE SOUTH DOME.

On my return to the valley the other day I immediately hastened to the Dome, not only for the pure pleasure climbing in view, but to see what else I might enjoy and learn. Our first winter storm had bloomed and all the mountains were mantled in fresh snow. I was therefore a little apprehensive of danger from the slipperiness of the rock, Anderson himself refusing to believe that any one could climb his rope in the condition it was then in. Moreover, the sky was overcast, and solemn snow-clouds began to curl and wreath themselves around the summit of the Dome, and my late experiences on icy Shasta came to mind. But reflecting that I had matches in my pocket, and that a little firewood might be found, I concluded that in case of a dark storm the night could be spent on the Dome without suffering anything worth caring for. I therefore pushed up alone and gained the top without the slightest difficulty. My first view was perfectly glorious. A massive cloud of a pure pearl lustre was arched across the valley, from wall to wall, the one end resting upon El Capitan, the other on Cathedral Rocks, the brown meadows shadowed beneath, with short reaches of the river shimmering in changeful light. Then, as I stood on the tremendous verge overlooking Mirror Lake, a flock of smaller clouds, white as snow, came swiftly from the north, trailing over the dark forests, and arriving on the brink of the valley descended with godlike gestures through Indian Canyon and over the Arches and North Dome, moving rapidly, yet with perfect deliberation. On they came, nearer, nearer, beneath my feet, gathering and massing, and filling the Tenaya abyss. Then the sun shone free, lighting them through and through and painting them with the splendors of the rainbow. It was one of those brooding days that come just between Indian summer and winter, when the clouds are like living creatures. Now and then the Valley appeared all bright and cloudless, with its crystal river meandering through colored meadow and grove, while to the eastward the snowy peaks rose in glorious array, keenly outlined on the pure azure. Then the clouds would come again, wreathing the Dome, and making a darkness like night.

Notwithstanding the enthusiastic eagerness of tourists to reach the summit of this Dome the general views of the valley from here are far less striking than from many other points, chiefly because of the foreshortening effect produced by looking from so great a height. North Dome is dwarfed almost beyond recognition. The splendid sculpture of the arches is scarcely noticed and the walls on both sides seem comparatively low and sunken. The Dome itself is the most sublime feature of all Yosemite views, and that is beneath our feet. The view of Little Yosemite Valley is very fine, though inferior to one obtained from the base of Starr King: but the summit landscapes towards Mounts Tyell, Dana and Conness are very effective and complete. When the sublime ice-floods of the glacial period poured down the flank of the range over what is now Yosemite Valley, they were compelled to break through a dam of domes extending across from Mount Starr King to North Dome; and as the period began to draw near a close and the ice currents shallowed and divided, South Dome was first to emerge from the icy waste, burnished and glowing like a crystal; and though it has sustained the wear and tear of the elements tens of thousands of years, it yet remains not merely a monument but a history of the glaciers that brought it to light. Its entire surface is covered with glacial hieroglyphics whose interpretation is the great reward of all who devoutly study them.

BOTANY OF THE DOME.

Before closing this letter I might say a word or two concerning the botany of the Dome. There are four clumps of pines growing on the summit representing three species, *Pinus flexilis*, *P. contorta* and *P. ponderosa*—var. *Jeffregii*—all three repressed and storm-beaten. The Alpine spiraea grows here also, and blooms bonniely with potentilla, ivesia, erigeron, erigonum, penstemon, solidago, and four or five species of grasses and sedges, differing in no respect from those of other summits of the same elevation.

"CONQUERING" MOUNTAINS—YOSEMITE IN AUTUMN.

I have always discouraged as much as possible every project for laddering the South Dome, believing it would be a fine thing to keep this garden untrodden. Now the pines will be carved with the initials of Smith and Jones, and the gardens strewn with tin cans and bottles, but the winter gales will blow most of this rubbish away, and avalanches may strip off the ladders; and then it is some satisfaction to feel assured that no lazy person will ever trample these gardens. When a mountain is climbed it is said to be conquered—as well say a man is conquered when a fly lights on his head. Blue jays have trodden the Dome many a day; so have beetles and chipmunks, and Tissiack will hardly be more conquered, now that man is added to her list of visitors. His louder scream and heavier scrambling will not stir a line of her countenance.

Yosemite Falls are flowing low these autumn days, so are streams of Yosemite travel, the one being a sure measure of the other. Nevertheless, at no time of the year is the valley more intensely lovely—the meadows frost-crystaled in the morning, sun-bathed in the warm noon; the oak leaves scarlet and brown, poplars and azaleas yellow; the Merced singing sweetly over low pebbly bars; ouzels dipping along the margin; trout leaping in sunny mirror-pools, the sheen of their scales blending with the flashing water. Later, golden rods blooming along the banks; violets and Johnsworts growing cheerily beneath withered breckens, and all the mosses are rising from the dead.

J. MUIR.